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September 11

STUDENT ESSAYS:

**America's
Midnight Buffet**

**Integrity is Going
to Hell in a
Handbasket, and
Cosmopolitan is
Packing the
Sandwiches**

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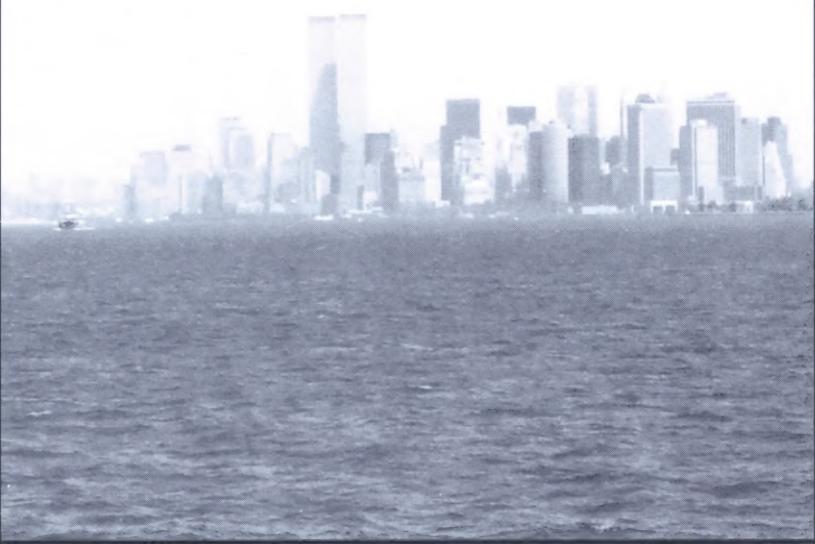


SPECIAL SECTION

On September 11, 2001, four commercial airplanes were hijacked in the United States. Two of the planes crashed into The World Trade Center towers, one crashed into The Pentagon, and one crashed outside Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

In this special section of *The Auburn Circle*, Auburn University students share their thoughts and reactions to the terrorist attacks.

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The World Trade Center Towers August 16, 2001, from the Staten Island Ferry.

AKH

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Cover & Back Cover by Jennifer Murphy

THE AUBURN CIRCLE

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The Auburn Circle serves as a forum for the writers and artists within the university community. Its goal is to reach a diverse audience by providing a variety of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, art and photography.

The Circle is published twice a year and is financed by advertising and student activity fees.

The views expressed throughout the issue are those of the authors, and not those of the advertisers, the *Circle* staff, or Auburn University.

Submissions

The Circle accepts work from students staff, and alumni of Auburn University. Prose, poetry, essays, and articles can be e-mailed to auburncircle@yahoo.com or brought to *The Circle* office typed or on disk.

Art and photographs can be brought to *The Circle* office. All submissions become property of *The Auburn Circle* on a one-time printing basis only. *The Circle* office is located in the Publications Suite in the basement of Foy.

For more information call 844-4122 to view *The Circle* online, visit www.auburn.edu/circle

Auburn University Division of Student Affairs



Photo by Alyson Hargraves
Senior/Fine Arts

FREE

*By Julie Anne Zorn
Senior/English*

She sat in patient vigil, the candle light and music absorbing into her.

She could feel every flicker of the flames, every pulse of the music, as a clock ticking slowly away to the time he would come to her. It seemed as though every sense of hers was heightened in his presence; every brush of a single hair against her naked back, every breath of his on her neck, a feeling of complete surrender. She ran her fingers through her hair, thinking that in a few moments, it would be his hand, his fingers, and his touch on her hair. She closed her eyes and drew in a deep breath, enjoying the wait. It was the time that she sat silently in her apartment that gave her the sense of being herself.

Stretched out lazily on her bed, the memories of their past encounters strolled through her mind. Never before had she been more at ease in front of another person. He always made her feel like there was nothing that could prevent her from molding the world as she saw fit. There was an unspoken under-

standing between them of never taking more from one another than they were willing to give. She recalled how they had never kissed or engaged in any act that would jeopardize what was especially theirs: the talent to have such an intense intimacy without ever crossing the line where friendship becomes more. Just his fingertips on her skin, traveling the lengths of her body and the way he would brush his hand so gently over hers, always left her with a longing to take his hand in hers and hold it for a moment so brief that only he could read the significance of such an act. There was an empowering energy exchanged through those fingertips, the strength she would need to face the following day, the freedom to enjoy the moment, and the moment just to be free.

The door had been left unlocked. She always liked the tense feeling in her muscles that followed the sound of hearing his confident knock on the door, then the crackling of the door opening. She listened from her loft upstairs for the sound

of a motor cutting off, and a car door slamming shut. She could almost imagine the sound of his light footsteps climbing the spiral staircase that led to her room, and the first sight of his taut figure standing at the entrance to her loft.

She had become accustomed to waiting for him to come. Even the slight hint of one of their nightly encounters left her in a state of serene excitement. Knowing that he would be there soon, she closed her eyes and let the hint of a smile crawl across her lips.

Jolting her out of the realm of content, she heard a pounding upon her door, one that she had not heard in some months. The sound conveyed the sporadic rhythm of a man in desperate longing, unsure, yet forcing himself to wail his knuckles upon the wood in resentment of everything he wanted to do.

The movement of her body preceded her thoughts. She sat up, feeling an uneasy tension in her muscles. She threw on her robe, pulled the belt tight around her waist, walked down the stairs, and turned the knob.

Standing in the shadows of her balcony was a man she had long since thought about. His face was torn with agony. She looked at him blankly, the look of despair in his eyes and the tortured posture of his stance all having little affect on her.

The blank look in her eyes turned into a cold, un-relentless stare of indifference to his suffering. Slowly, a sparkle of amusement twinkled in her eyes. This, she thought, this is what I had wanted you to look like on that night three months ago, this is everything I had wanted you to feel this is what I looked like that day. "What are you doing here?"

Barely audible, he said,

"I came here to." he paused, a look of helplessness in his eyes
"Do you miss me?"

With the cold indifference returning to her eyes, staring dead into his, she said, "You shouldn't have come here. I'm expecting company."

"Please! I need to talk to you."

"I said I'm expecting company."

"It's just, I was thinking all those things you said to me about being there for me no matter what you said them after we stopped seeing each other."

"That was before I knew the truth."

Her cold, calculated voice cut through his sentence with a blow so sharp that it seemed to stop his words in mid-air. He spoke, almost as in defiance of the her statement, "I had to, I couldn't have done any thing else at the time, I was scared, I,"

"Don't play your helplessness off on me.

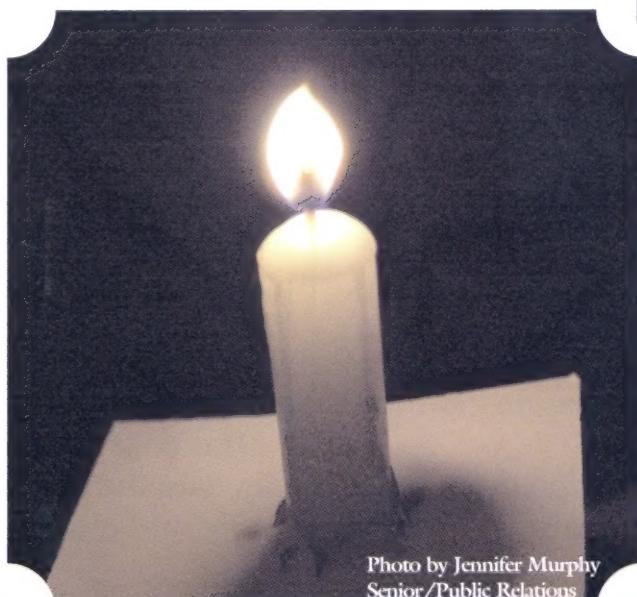


Photo by Jennifer Murphy
Senior/Public Relations

I don't care why you did it. You never told me the truth from the start. I refuse to believe anything you say now about that issue. I don't respect you enough to even dignify the thought of honesty in your words; I barely respect you enough to allow you in my presence."

"But I."

"Let's get one thing straight, I am not about to stand here and take your suffering as a reason I should listen to a word you have to say. You came here to say something to me. Say it. Don't waste my time with a plea for sympathy, I don't respond to talk of that nature."

She could almost hear the beats of his heart, like the ticking of the second hand on a clock. He raised his head, looking into her eyes. She knew he could not stand the look in her eyes; it was a look she had never shown him before.

"Don't look at me like that," he whispered.

"How should I look at you? Like I never found out that you lied? Like you didn't feed me a line? Like you didn't ruin an otherwise wonderful day? I can't look at you like that anymore because you did."

She watched him indifferently as his eyes slipped closed. He spoke softly, not really to her, but as if his thoughts could not remain silent inside his own mind,

"Your eyes, those beautiful eyes, saying all that was never confessed you knew then."

When his eyes opened, the only sign her eyes conveyed was the rem-

nant of a past long since forgotten. Slowly, his tongue brushed his lips, as in preparation for speaking, but too many heartbeats had passed. She took a step back and reached for the door.

"Wait, please hear me out" he said in panic.

"I won't allow you to waste another second of my life." She said it simply, with no hint of anger in her voice, just as a statement of fact.

"Say what you came to say."

"If I do, will you hear me out?

There's so much that has been left

unsaid. We have a lot to talk about."

"We have nothing to talk about, and from the sound of it, you have nothing of any importance to say to me."

Following her last word was the closing of the door. She did not move. She stood

still, clasping the doorknob with her hand.

Breaking the thick silence between them, she heard his words. "But I love you! Please, I love you." If she could have attributed a sound to the hours of the previous night that he had been fighting those words back into silence, the audible cry of pain in his voice would have been the sum of those hours.

The only response she had to offer him was the sound of the lock pushed firmly into place.

*Like you didn't
feed me a line?
Like you didn't
ruin an otherwise
wonderful day?*

Mother's Eyes

By D. Littleton

My mother's eyes are like no other,
To look in them
Is to see another world,
A land of warmth, compassion, and
joy,
A valley of tears, sadness, and
heartache,
The loving sun shines
But a pain-filled storm, at times,
does appear.
There are truthful flowers
And trees of wisdom
Grounded by roots of care
Made from seeds of concern
In this wonderful place
That only a daughter may learn.

Photo by La Lee Partain
Senior/Li cal Arts

Integrity is Going to Hell in a Handbasket, and COSMOPOLITAN is Packing the Sandwiches

By Patricia Cooper
Junior/Graphic Design

Any girl-next-door can learn to look good naked while engaging in celebrity gossip, seducing her boss and dabbing pizza with a three-ply paper towel. This is the divine message decoded before readers of the modern female magazine, *Cosmopolitan*. Doves of young women worldwide from various social, financial and educational backgrounds read this product of American pop-culture religiously. As the widest selling monthly periodical of its kind, it is currently available in 39 international editions.

According to context clues, the targeted audience of this monthly periodical, are the twenty-somethings. But, I believe *Cosmo* also frequently falls into the hands of the inquisitive younger, teens and pre-teens lured to the newsstand by front cover captions such as, "Boxers? Briefs? Or Nothing?" and "Make Him Your Sensual Soul Mate." The three letters S, E and X, combined, grace the front cover of the January 2001 issue three times. Honestly, though this month's issue of *Cosmopolitan* is the only one I have owned, the same racy content that magnetizes the interest of countless other young women also attracted me.

As a single female and a new member to twenty-something society, I was curious about the

magazine's risqué opinions. I was met with thorough guidance of how to lie, cheat and play a role to get what *Cosmo* claims I want. An excerpt titled, "Drink Hot Chocolate Seductively," gives the following step-by-step advice:

Take a swig of cocoa, smearing whipped cream over your top lip. Then slowly bring your tongue up and across your upper lip. Look him in the eye, say "Mmmm," then swallow.

The tone of *Cosmopolitan's* articles is upbeat, confident, sassy and tongue-in-cheek. The language employs the latest in cutting edge slang as frequently as possible and often invents it. Alliteration is also enormously popular in article titles such as, "Boost Your Bedroom Bond," "Slyly Seduce the Boss: Share a Sexy Dream" and the more sensitive, "When Your Honey's Hurting: How You Can Help Heal Your Man's Heart." My personal favorite is an article titled, "Nab Him in Four Nights," a what-to-wear Rx for the first four dates with a man to ensure a continuing relationship.

The first successful date would cost a die-hard "Cosmogirl" \$446, plus any applicable taxes. The second rendezvous, \$691, the third, \$588, and the fourth, \$516 (Lawrence 66). Get out your

credit cards girls, because with a trivial \$2,241.00 and four effortless evenings, you can buy yourself into a lasting commitment!

Cosmo is truly a magazine with a "broad" audience. The periodical is chiefly feminine, and it attracts women from many walks of life. Some women obtain *Cosmo* for its Kama Sutra guides. Some buy it for the horoscopes, fashion or beauty tips. Many purchase the magazine for what they believe is an insight to men. Some desperate males even acquire the magazine in hopes of finding within its pages a glimpse of what women want. A number of readers turn to *Cosmopolitan* seeking the racy and provocative. Others simply enjoy the irony of its hallowed hollowness.

Advertisements within the magazine, all geared toward females, serve as huge clues to its audience. *Cosmopolitan's* advertising patrons sell products to women of a vast world of incomes and lifestyles. Ads range from cheap thrills like singles hotlines and sex toys to posh clothing and \$500 shoes. There are advertisements for tampons, PMS medications and even the new thong panty liner from Alldays. The majority of the ads, however, seem to explicitly target the superficial and the weak of mind. I counted 25 full color

spreads advertising various types of life-changing makeup, hair and facial products, four ads for breast enlarging creams and procedures, seven ads for sexual enhancement catalogues, and a staggering 32 different advertisements for "Real" psychic hotlines.

Cosmopolitan is easily obtained and assumed innocent – despite explicit subject matter. As a sixth grader, I once heard a friend announce a new sex technique she read about in *Cosmo*. Although the specifics are too graphic for my purposes, the bare fact that my buddies were trading sex secrets in the sixth grade is alarming. Magazines, by targeting a mature audience, automatically acquire a secondary consumership of youth. Curious young girls turn to

Cosmopolitan for enlightening carnal anecdotes, and they often look to the glamorously promiscuous women portrayed in the magazine as the female ideal. A unique magnetism between sexual content and adolescents definitely exists. Yet, sex has proven itself to be exceptionally marketable for any age group.

My issue of *Cosmopolitan* contains three full-page advertisements for Clairol's Herbal Essences, a product line whose ongoing advertising campaign uses sexual innuendos to make its name memorable. One ad, sheathed in this month's special feature, "Bedside Astrologer 2001," showcases a nude woman photographed from the rear, her posterior creatively concealed by a bottle of Herbal Essences Moisturizing Lotion. Words

spelled out sinuously across her bare upper back with creamy lines of lotion inquire, "Is your skin ready for some serious pleasure?" Other captions found in the three Herbal Essences advertisements are, "Yes! Yes! Yes!" "H2 Oh! Oh! Oh!" and the catchy trademark phrase, "A totally organic experience." The same successful stratagems used in Clairol's Herbal Essences campaign have trickled down into ads for its other product lines, as it encourages women to "Go all the way," with Ultress haircolor. The same provocative

fund the media, the media in turn spreads popular ideas, and audiences facilitate the cycle through consumerism.

According to the website of Hearst International, *Cosmo*'s distributor, "The *Cosmopolitan* reader loves men, loves children, but doesn't want to live through other people – she wants to live on her own." I do not dare attempt to dispute the assertion that the average *Cosmo* reader loves men. Ironically, however, the only segments I found in my copy of the magazine remotely related to children were ads for

Ortho tri-cyclen, a birth control pill, and an article announcing the release of Mifepristone, the new "Abortion Pill." Furthermore, *Cosmo* does not promote independence, but is instead equipped to serve as a prescription

for how a "Fun, Fearless Female" should act, dress, and even feel. Honesty and integrity are hard-sellers in the global economy of this age. "Be yourself" is far too unpretentious a recommendation to fill any marketable magazine. Popular society thrives on the excitement of the scandalous, racy and provocative. Personal integrity has suffered for years because of it, but like a spoonful of sugar, the catchy language, glamorous imagery and playful attitude of *Cosmopolitan* help the medicine go down.

'Take a swig of cocoa, smearing whipped cream over your top lip. Then slowly bring your tongue up and across your upper lip. Look him in the eye, say "Mmmm," then swallow.'

ideas that win attention in this type of advertisement are magnified times over in *Cosmopolitan*'s articles. I side with Freud. Sex sells.

By targeting an audience of young women, *Cosmopolitan* owns the potential to reach the entirety of one of the planet's most prevalent consumer groups. Furthering this potential, *Cosmo* employs captivating language and imagery to set standards readers readily follow. In today's largely superficial society, myriads of *Cosmo* readers are willing patrons of the "beautifying" products and ideas promoted within its pages. As long as information transports such as *Cosmopolitan* exist, producers and consumers will continue to whirl in an endless and growing cycle of commerce. Advertisers



photo by AKH

Everyone Knows Someone in New York

I think I heard about you today,
Though I didn't know it was you.

I know I hurt for you, though
Even if you're someone I never knew.

And I'll miss you even if
I only knew you through this morning,

And I know I'll cry for you
When I'm away and all alone.

This morning I think I heard you whisper
Your wishes of soft goodbyes.

And I felt your courage this morning
As I felt too weak to leave my bed.

And I heard your farewell today
In the gentle peace before your storm.

Cause everyone knows somebody in New York,

And this morning we all lost someone.
And though I will not know to miss you
My heart cries out for those who do.

By Tracy Tidwell

He's Leaving... By: Leslie Glenn

He's Leaving in a Month

But he's giving me signs: eye contact that lasts a second too long, going out of his way to make physical contact, that knowing smile...

But he's leaving in a month...

So I give him signs: eye contact that lasts a second too long, rapt attention paid to his stories, innocent flirtation...

But he's leaving in a month...

So I've asked him to my banquet by the time our show closes, but he still doesn't know (not real...). And the thought of not seeing him everyday is not pleasant...

Because he's leaving in a month...

He calls two days later—a carnival with some of his friends. I take money, but he buys my tickets. We ride the rides and laugh, but only a hug at the end of the evening...

Because he's leaving in a month...

Plans are made for Wednesday—one of the bars downtown with some of my friends he knows. Some other girl keeps hitting on him, and so I take a chance and make my move—I ask him to dance...

Because he's leaving in a month...

He dances well, and we fit nicely together. We have a great time, not caring if we are noticed. I recognize that look on his face. I try to ignore it...

Because he's leaving in a month...

But the look does not go away, and I like him looking at me that way. So I dive right in with my arms. He kisses me...

But he's leaving in a month...

My mind keeps reminding me of this fact. But I choose to ignore it. I dive in head first not knowing the depth of the water or my feelings...

Because he's leaving in a month...

He seems to know me too well. Our dates are as varied as my interests—starlit evenings with wine and music and dancing; a playground; nice, long dinners with even nicer, longer conversations; a baseball game and then a chance open gate at Jordan-Hare. We enter and run the length of the 100 yards of grass. It is so wonderful, yet I wonder why I'm falling for him...

Because he's leaving in a month...

It's happened before: I found a great guy. He left and I got hurt. So I should have learned my lesson. But I want no regrets in life. I never want to wonder, "What if...?" So I will take advantage of every moment I have with him...

Because he's leaving in a month...

Self-Examination

*By Rachel Robinson
Senior/Communications*

**Flaw upon flaw picked apart by the
flawed

categorizing the character in question

and finally, questioning the question
itself

to determine

if the worrying is worth the rewards it
reaps

in examining the self with an honest
eye.**

Midnight

By Doward Williams
Senior/Graphic Design

At the twilight, three past midnight,
A girl speaks of respect.
She earns mine slowly, affectionately.

At the twilight, five past midnight,
A girl talks of fear and the future.
The two seem to go hand in hand these
days.

At the twilight, ten past midnight,
A girl yawns to sleepiness and dreams,
But I don't know what tomorrow may bring.

At the twilight, half an hour past midnight,
Men are drunk in bars, talking to girls,
I'm imitating life with a fine point pen.

At the twilight, forty-five past midnight,
Time tick-tocks away, chasing tomorrow,
But some still won't let go of yesterday.

AMERICA'S MIDNIGHT BUFFET

An Essay by Scott Gates

Senior/Communications

Over the course of my college career, I can't tell you how many times I've gotten excited reports from my friends about weekend trips to Biloxi, Mississippi. Supposedly, the Las Vegas of the South, or the closest you can come without being on some hapless Indian Reservation, I had come to envision the place as a great center of pure entertainment, bustling with open bars, chances to make a quick win and beautiful yet eager women. Having recently been to Biloxi, I can now verify that no place like that exists on earth, unless of course you count the sets of most independent foreign films.

Now, I'll agree that the circumstances under which I went were nothing like the drunken road trips I'd heard tale of, instead, it came in the form of a fishing trip with my father. I must make note here that he's not what most would picture as a father, ready to climb into the

Crown Victoria with his son and head down to the gulf for some fishin'. In fact, he'd be more than eager to see me involved in any of the situations above, even ready to join in, except, of course, in the case eager women. I'm pretty sure he'd let me handle that one on my own. I'll stop mentioning any eager women from here on out, because bringing them up like this all the time really just makes their absence more painful, and we all know that I did not encounter any over the course of the fishing trip.

I use the term "fishing trip" loosely here, because it really can't be described as that in the least. We arrived at the marina, a sprawling system of boat slips attached to our resort/hotel/casino compound, bright and early Saturday morning. Walking confidently out to the marina office, I felt swollen with testosterone at the thought of the trip ahead. The plan was to board a sturdy little vessel, ride it

30 miles off the coast to a floating fishing lodge and proceed to enjoy 24 straight hours of deep-sea hunting. I could already taste the marlin and had reserved places in my photo album at home for the victory shots displaying our catch, perhaps some featuring me being hoisted onto someone's shoulders. The captain, of course, would most likely look to me for guidance when the storm came up, but I would be glad to cover for him and bring the crew home safely.

Having checked in and met Michael, our red-neck guide, it became obvious that things were not going to pan out as I had hoped. According to Michael, beyond the seemingly calm stretch of water near shore lurked what he referred to as "10-foot seas." This was why "the guys," that rag-tag band of sea-goers that were supposed to hoist me onto their shoulders in praise, had already cancelled their trip. We were the only ones who had not. I should mention here that my father had decided to take the trip in order to write a story for a magazine he works for, and he needed at least some sort of picture showing a person holding a fishing rod. Michael quickly agreed to oblige by taking us a few yards out, where I would be able to pose like a real fisherman. I say this in order to give the reader a bit of foreshadowing in regards to my true skill with the rod.

Soon we were in position, and Michael was tying a lure onto one of the smaller rods-not what I had expected to be working with, but I figured it would do. He then gave me the order to cast over the bow of the boat as my father readied his camera.

'He let loose a quick whip of the rod, causing me to duck and cover like a cheerleader in a thunderstorm...'

"Ha," I thought, "I think I might just go ahead and catch a fish anyway, just for the picture!" I steadied myself on the vessel's mighty prow and let loose with my best cast.

Michael was not pleased. "Ah, he's gone and backlashed it!" he said. I looked in horror as my lure plunked into the water two feet ahead of me. I grinned slightly and frantically tried to reel the line in to make another cast as quickly as possible, but the reel locked up as a thick knot jammed the spool. As hard to imagine as it may be, I could actually feel my manhood falling behind my lure into the murky depths below the boat. Michael trotted up

behind me and fiddled with the reel while my dad lowered his camera. "There you go." Michael said, having fixed the problem. "Let me see if I can make this thing work."

He let loose a quick whip of the rod, causing me to duck and cover like a cheerleader in a thunderstorm, something that I don't recall seeing marlin fishermen do on any of the fishing shows I've seen in the past. I stood up quick and tried to regain composure as he handed me the pole. "Reel 'er in." Now this was something I could handle. I reeled to my heart's content, striking a stern yet thoughtful pose as my father clicked away a series of surely inspiring pictures. I won't go into what happened after I got the lure out of the water. I'll just say that it involved many more failed casts which eventually led to Michael abandoning the whole fishing idea and taking us on a boat ride. I sat in the back and tried not to

act like I was holding on for dear life when he gunned it to 50 miles per hour.

After about an hour in the boat, we turned to shore and headed back to the marina. I was completely defeated, and I wanted to get as far away from Michael as possible. He was that southern good-old-boy type that I do enjoy hanging out with, but usually make a fool of me. So, with the end of the trip ruined, there was nothing left to do but retire to the hotel for the rest of the weekend.

Having passed through it a few times already, I could tell that this was going to truly test my tolerance of "casino people," or as I like to call them, morons. My first glimpse into their world came through a haze of 80s pop music and primary color-

smeared carpet, as we passed through the lobby en route to the pool. From what I could tell, besides my father and I, the guests were limited to three categories. The first was obvious, joining the ranks of my friends who stop in for the weekend to raise some hell. I quickly learned, though, that if they're not friends of mine, these hammered-at-seven-in-the-morning-twenty-somethings are just obnoxious.

Still, my opinion of the first group is miles ahead of category number two, made up of overweight middle-aged couples that all look alike. You can usually bump into this type moving from the nickel slots to the midnight buffet, wearing matching outfits of flowered shirts and white safari shorts. The last of the casino-resort breed I must hold somewhat closer

to my heart, because somewhere along the line my grandmother fell in with them. This type is always on the high-stakes slots, mindlessly mashing away at the "bet three credits" button on the machine, forgoing the most rewarding aspect of gambling: the slot machine pull-arm. You can find scores of these high-rolling senior citizens lined up in front of the slot

machines, clutching buckets of quarters, at any time of day.

I once asked my grandmother what led these people to waste away their social security checks so carelessly. She responded with an answer that I would never have thought of and displayed her brilliance in full form. Her explanation was simple: it's the gas the casino pumps in.

contributed



Let me break it down for you. Say I stroll into a casino with, say, five dollars and a credit card. As most would see it, I could sit down at a slot machine, spend my five dollars, and walk out happy—maybe five dollars in the hole. This is not the case in your run-of-the-mill Biloxi casino. The catch is that while I am spending my five dollars, I am breathing in the oxygen-rich gas that the management is pumping through the air vents, causing me to, as my grandmother so frankly put it, "forget where I am." As a result, I would of course pull out my credit card and proceed to blow my grandson's inheritance in a five-dollar slot machine. This alone explains category number three, which we all know keeps the casinos from an embarrassing state of debt.

I spent a good bit of my weekend avoiding those that I've just mentioned. And I must give myself some credit for getting so good at it; it's no easy task. You'll be strolling along, trying to avoid making eye contact with anyone, when out of nowhere an old man will cruise his motorized wheel-chair right into your shin, only to throw it into reverse with disdain and shake his head in disbelief over the fact that other people might need to get somewhere as well. Between the carpet, the music and the gas permeating the casino it's a miracle anyone can make it out alive.

After dealing with all of that for a few hours too many, I was overjoyed to hear that my father had gotten ahold of some tickets to see the much-praised "Lord of the Dance", the brain-child of none other than Celtic legend Michael Flatley himself. What better way to escape the trappings of casino life than by being immersed in a lavish world of flamboyant dance steps and shimmering leotards? It all seemed too good to be true, and in keeping with the rest of our makeshift road trip, it was.

Although our seats were actually pretty good, I soon came to realize that we were surrounded by the same manner of people I had hoped to escape. Apparently seeing "Lord of the Dance" is all part of the experience for those wanting a true taste of Biloxi, and it is practically indistinguishable from a round at the craps table or a two-hour gorging at the seafood buffet. As it happens, the woman seated to my left had seemingly indulged a bit too extravagantly in the latter activity, and had become swollen to the point of taking up more seat than was allocated by one ticket.

When the show ended, the standing ovation that ensued could rarely be matched outside of Biloxi. It was hard for me to believe that not 30 minutes before all of this a woman had shouted out, "Is that all?" during

what could best be described as the Intermission Dance. By the end of it, even the hardest to please left feeling satisfied.

After we left the show there was nothing left to experience, except the midnight buffet. I could go on at length about the various seafood dishes that were served there but I want to spare myself, because the memory still haunts me.

I should have seen the disappointment coming when I read the name, Midnight – Seafood – Buffet, but by then I had inhaled a good bit of gas and was still in a daze from all the glitter thrown around during the show.

The next day, with the horrors of the previous night still heavy on our minds, we got up and bee-lined to the checkout desk. With the experience nearing an end, my father summed up the whole thing by saying, "You know if we had paid for that I would be really disappointed right now." And that's what I read on most of the faces leaving with us, after a weekend of high-stakes tables and shoddy meals. Someday, in the company of friends, now knowing what to avoid. But as I see it, once I hit middle-age I must keep out of casinos at all costs, or I might find myself wearing a flowered shirt and white shorts, telling my kids through a gas-induced delirium how great a fisherman I am.

The Fairies of Dim Understanding

By Katherine Crona
Junior/English

Beauty frolics in the fields of prairies;

Many hypnotized by the presence they carry.

Aging here loses innocence.

Inward darkness has taken pence.

Fooling those of trust is easy for these.

Beware of the poison for they do deceive.

For they know that they are fair

And try to hide darkness under skin's layer.

Oh the fairies of dim understanding,

This is the reason they are so demanding.

For they know of themselves only,

And not the others they leave lonely.



By Lindsay Herman
Senior/Graphic Design

Change of Life

By Micheil O'Rourke-Cole
Senior/Journalism

They have yet to leave Summer behind
These mighty trees on the highway lined
The grass has browned, as if gotten the clue
That the frost and the cold and the snow are now due.

But not the trees
No not these
Still as green
As a July scene
Defying the freeze
And the Northeast breeze

How dare they!
These obstinate ones!
Who beneath them the goldenrod sway
And the milkweed already has its seed away
They, as if struck by a new fashion sense
Have the green and red separate and dense
Looking half-in and half-out dressed

But see how disappointed am I
To travel North
Inspired by the Autumn sky
I can smell the Fall and look to the maple
My inspiration to enable

It has now come to my soul to influence
There are but few here that dare to bare the violet at once
This awkward in-between the then and now,
Has hurt my homesick heart somehow.

But now I ramble on and on,
Like those poets I am bored to read.
I think they spend too much time about the seeds
When the tree is what the adjective needs.
Bemoaning their youth and ignoring completely
The presence of the current change in majesty.



Rag Doll by Julie C. McConnell
Senior/Liberal Arts

Ambition

Once I never wanted to be anything more than a dreamer,
I never thought that I would actually go,
I always thought that I could somehow just dream here,
And know the things that I already know.

Complacency had spun its web around me
So subtly had I slipped into its hold
That I never saw the dreams begin to fade,
Never noticed the spark of insight growing cold.

A challenge was required to drive my interest
I could not stay there, stagnant:
I must grow

To simply be is beautiful,
But life's true mission
Is to move beyond what you already know.

Always striving, never ceasing,
Until finally, at long last,
I will see the things I only dreamed and wished for
Come to pass.

By Kimberly L. Thomason
Junior/Science and Math

Like A Woman

By Callie Maudlin

And in the middle of the Fromers' backyard in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where a cool October breeze whistled its breath through the tops of bright orange clad trees, Megan Chandler started her period. At first, it felt like a leaky faucet was in her pink underpants, and then gooey, wet, warmth. She didn't know what was happening. She excused herself from an almost all-male game of touch football and headed for the wooden stairs. She looked bow-legged, she felt blue like panic. She waded through a pile of raked leaves that so naturally mimicked the oranges, reds, and yellows of fire. She wanted to jump in, save herself from embarrassment, but she didn't. She stopped in front of the red canna lilies, sneakily catching a glimpse of the crotch of her worn in Levis. Just jagged teeth of a zipper, biting to keep hold of its other half. Thank God. She was in the clear. One. Two. Three. Four steps and in the

house on Deer Circle that separated Spring Boulevard from Lovers Lane. Ricki's mom was in the kitchen when Megan opened the door; she was making chicken salad with raisins and walnuts. Her favorite. But she had to make it to the bathroom. If she could just make it pass Mrs...."Megan, dear..Are you alright? You look pale?" She wanted to hide. To duck. To runaway. To scream. Instead, she started crying. And crying. And crying. "I just have to go to the bathroom."

By the time she walked to her mother's apartment, she was tired and embarrassed. She found her mother asleep on the couch next to a half empty bottle of white Zinfandel. The television was on Channel 68, which only showed old reruns of fifty's shows. The pink heart that houses the "I Love Lucy" was frozen on the screen. She smiled timidly, she used to love that show. When she

was little, Megan and her dad, her brother, Tim, and her mother all used to curl up on the sofa and watch "I love Lucy" reruns. She watched her mother's eyelids quiver. It seemed like all her mother did since her dad left was sleep. How can a person hibernate for six months, Megan wondered. She noticed her brother's framed Alpha Sigma picture staring back at her. He had the most beautiful blue eyes, but the most awkward smile, Megan thought. She got up really close to the picture frame, so close that her breath left it wet. She wanted to look into his eyes. To ask him what was so bad about his life that he wanted to end it, to end their parents marriage, to end everything normal for all of them. It was selfish, Megan thought. Mean and selfish. The picture of his blue body and white stained lips had fixed itself in that place in her mind that could see, that could remember. It was all she ever dreamt about. She had been there the day he overdosed.

It was early last April, when it was still a little cold in Tulsa, but nice, for going outside. Tim had called earlier that morning to remind everybody of his Alpha Sig Parents Day event. He was excited. Megan could hear it over the phone. He had always wanted a brother. And now he had two hundred. "Yeah, and there's gonna be food there so don't worry. Just come on. And don't worry about what to wear cause it's pretty casual and all. Yeah, you guys are

gonna love the brothers. Okay. See you soon." She couldn't decide on what to wear. There were gonna be all these older guys there and she wanted to look nice for Tim, for her big brother. She

was proud of him. He had been sorta shy and weird in high school and had wanted to go to art school in Chicago, but he didn't get in. Or did-

*He had the most
beautiful blue eyes,
but the most
awkward smile'*

n't want to go. Something like that. Megan couldn't remember the details. She just knew that her parents were really happy that he was going to be close, only ninety miles away, in Brayburn, and that he had gotten to go somewhere for free. Anyway, he had gone to Oklahoma State on full scholarship and shocked everyone by joining a frat. But he seemed happy and that's all that mattered.

About an hour and a half later, she and her parents drove up to the Alpha Sig house in their gray Buick, amidst flocks of parents and siblings. Megan was excited. She had never been to a college campus before. There were lots of trees; a lot more than she expected. By the time Megan and her parents reached the door to the frat, a line had formed and they were at a standstill. She could see a buffet table through a crack in the human wall. Chicken salad with walnuts and raisins. Her favorite. She pushed her short body through the line of hungry, chatty parents and found her way through the crack in the human wall and then the buffet table. There

were two long tables covered in white table cloths in the entry room of the frat house. The room was really nice. It had hard wood everywhere. She had carpet in her room at home. All the rooms had carpet, even though her mother said it looked cheap.

She was first and only in line at the buffet table, had her plastic plate in hand with the little Alpha Sig symbol sketched on it when she saw her brother Tim without his shirt on with two other guys in blue blazers and blue trouser pants. Tim looked like he was sleeping and sweating and crying all at once. Megan had never seen him like that. She followed the two suits and her brother into the hallway. She was gripping her Alpha Sig plate like it was her life. She could see the tops of her fingernails -where her mother cut them too short- turn white. She heard them talking to each other while other blue suits walked up and down hurriedly down the all-wood hallway. "What if he's not okay. I mean he doesn't look okay. He looks weird." She felt small and cold. She wondered where her parents were and if they were worried about her. The suits took her brother to a corner room, number 43, and shut the big wooden door. Megan could see them through the key-hole. They were taking off the rest of her brother's clothes. He had on a black tie and plaid boxer shorts when they were thru. He wasn't moving. She wanted to say something, to do something, but she couldn't stop staring. She was afraid he would go away if she quit looking at him. It was like the keyhole was magic. She could remember all sorts of things she hadn't thought about in for-

ever. Christmas time. How her mother made Tim read her the same story every Christmas, *The Night Before Christmas* and how they always got bored after "on Donner, on Blitzen, on Cupid.." and read something else, whatever Tim was reading in school at the time. Last Christmas, it was War and Peace. The two suits were on the telephone, now. They looked scared. They were talking to Tim, telling him to wake up or they would beat his ass.

"Get the f**k up Tim. I mean it. I'm not f****ing playing Tim. Jesus F**king Christ Mike, I don't think his heart is beating."

The Christmas before that, it was Crime and Punishment.

"I don't think...What are we gonna do? Oh, my God."

"Just shut up. Shut the f**k up."

Before that, he had been reading Gulliver's Travels.

"They're sending an ambulance, okay. Everything is going to be fine. Everything..."

Lord Jim.

"F**K"

Frankenstein.

"HES NOT BREATHING."

The Old Man in the Sea.

"HES NOT F***ING BREATH-
ING..."

She could remember back.

"F**K,

F**K,

F**K"

Way back.

Megan passed out in the hallway.

The night of her first period,

Megan awoke to her mother's muffled crying in the next room. She put her pillow over her ears so that she couldn't hear her cat-like screams. They had gotten



*By Melanie Foreman
Senior/Fine Arts*

softer since it happened, but they were still unbearable. Why can't she just move on, Megan thought. Be normal. Her Maxi pad felt weird between her legs. It was huge, and felt like she had an entire box of Kleenex down there. Her stomach hurt where her ovaries were. How weird, she thought, periods. The fact that she could create life if she wanted to. She felt like she was in possession of something majestic, something powerful, something new. She laughed to herself, trying to imagine herself with an actual baby. "Oh my God" she said, out loud. "A baby. That's so weird." She put her hand on her stomach. She realized that her mother must have felt

that way about Tim, about her own baby, about losing him. She unclasped the pillow from her ears and made herself listen to her mother's whine. And suddenly, she wanted to climb into bed with her, and comfort her, and tell her that it wasn't her fault, that she loved her, that she was a good mother. Instead she lay there, listening, not moving. She could see white shadows, shapeless, moving across the ceiling. She wanted to grab them, pull them down, make them stay put, but she knew she couldn't. She just knew.

Junk

By Marcy Beasley
Senior/English

It happened on a cold wintry night. The sound of the leaves rustling in the wind was all that could be heard. The light from the Christmas tree in the window cast enough light for me to complete the final touches to the best story I have ever written. So why did it feel like junk to me. I was told in college that if you thought it was junk then everyone else would think that it is gold, because a writer is her own worst critic. Somehow that didn't apply to this story, something was off, but what?

It wasn't the character the character was solid. A young man who couldn't seem to do anything right no matter how he tried. The deeper he fell into despair the stronger the character became. Maybe that was the problem. No one wants to see despair, especially if you're living through it. So, a complete overhaul of either the character or my frame of mind was necessary. It would be easier to change the character but the character was good, my frame of mind was what needed to change.

How could you just change your frame of mind, it's not like you can take an eraser and erase the last year and a half of your life. Life was great until he came into my life; actually, it was great then too, it was when he left that it all went south. He was the father that I never had; he was the father that I needed. Not only did he listen to me like I was his own, but he never said things like, "well just try harder" or "well a B is good but an A that would be great." It didn't last long though.

A year after he was with my mother, I started to get comfortable. It was like 'ok this guy is really going to stay around and might actually go the distance.' It was the first relationship she had ever had that they were able to celebrate anything, let alone a first year anniversary. My mom picked me up from school and we walked up to the house thinking he hadn't got home from work yet, since all the lights were out. We got to the front door and there were two presents leaning against it, and a card.

Since, it was just dusk, there was enough light for mom to read the card, while I ripped open the pretty paper, blue I believe. It was only clothes, I looked up to see my mom, and she was crying. She handed me the card while she opened her box with red paper. The card invited my mother and I to dinner at the nicest restaurant in town.

Sitting there at the table, in the clothes from the “blue box,” listening to him tell her how much he loved her and how happy he was that she and I had come into her life, I felt safe. He proposed that night; at the time, I didn’t know what that meant, all that changed was that he started sleeping at our house. Then a lot started changing. He lost his job, and mom was trying to support all three of us on what she made at her job. She worked on commission so some weeks were better than others but she just kept telling us we would be fine. I believed her. I knew she would do whatever was necessary to keep us above water, she always had. It bothered him that she was now the one “in charge” because she had control on the money. She knew that going out to a nice dinner wasn’t a good idea because next week we may need that money for bills.

They started to argue, mostly about money, and “control,” that was said a lot too. I heard them argue, even over the volume of the stereo, which always seemed to come on during an argument, but I assumed it would all be ok. It always had why should now be different, but it was. He started to drink, said

it was the only thing to do during the day and mom would shoot back with you could get a job, which never helped.

Finally, he had enough, or I guess he had enough, he never told anyone his plans. It all was so unexpected, but familiar. We drove home from school, and

the whole ride home I begged for a new pair of shoes, knowing there wasn’t any money, but I had had the same pair for 2 years. I didn’t think it was a bad request; after all my birthday was coming up. Walking up to a dark house we saw two presents were leaning against the door, one blue, and one red. This time the card was in Mom’s box. After reading, she unlocked the door and started to prepare dinner, this time for two. She left her box on the porch; I took my new doll inside. I was told to do my homework. As I walked up the stairs I noticed that the family photo from so long ago was broken. I didn’t ask because I knew it would all be “ok” it always had.

The story still needs something but I’m going to leave it alone for now. Maybe a happy person will think it’s gold because they aren’t dealing with the despair first hand, who knows? But now I don’t think it’s junk anymore, well at least not as junkie as it once was because it has to be junk to be gold, right?

I knew it would be ok, it always had been.’

Plastic Slush



*By Robert Voitle
Senior/Journalism*

i need something more. . .

By Brantley Raley
Junior/English

Don sat in a large red-vinyl booth in a mostly empty Red Lobster. From where he sat he could see out the window, above which hung a plastic swordfish with glossy eyes fixed in an expression of horror. It was around four in the afternoon on a motionless October day. Outside everything had a weird, muted, grayish tint, which is always the case with the approaching of bad weather. Don was drinking a Long Island iced tea and trying to remember what it was he was supposed to be doing. He rubbed the condensation from the glass into his palms and thought it was a shame he couldn't go to a bar to drink, but he knew that a 37-year-old, balding guy drinking alone was a pathetic sight to see. He wished he were younger, or just better looking.

What Don couldn't remember was that he was supposed to be meet a client today. He had scheduled the meeting two weeks prior with one of his many patients whom he commonly referred to as "the walking soon to be dead." The pre-zombie in question was Cecil Pearson, a 91-year-old war vet with brown and yellow liver spots and a big pension, who wanted to upgrade his old hearing aid. Don had, after much haggling, sold the man on the new

Whisper 3100, which he was able to purchase wholesale for \$450 and sell for more than \$4,000. Normally he would seriously berate himself for missing such a sale, but for now he was content to pretend to read the newspaper and slowly get drunk.

Two days earlier, while Don sat self-consciously, in only his boxers, a doctor with a Polish name and long, thin, almost feminine hands, had stared at the space above his head and said the words "prostate cancer." The doctor went on to say things like "tests," "malignant" and "spreading", but Don couldn't really hear him. The only thing Don was able to get out was "how long?" and the answer of "three months at the most" took his breath. The room had suddenly gotten colder, and his mind was full of images of all his aging clients. Don stared at his hands while the doctor just kept explaining and consoling, and Don wanted to tell him to leave.

Don lived alone in a yellow apartment building in Eliot Park, Florida, where he owned two stores in the "Miracle Ear Family," as the higher-ups like to say at the conferences. Eliot Park was a retirement community on the Gulf side of the state. Don had done well for himself, making money on the failing

health of the retirees around him. Once in the early 90s, Eliot Park had the highest mortality rate of any U.S. city. Don had joked saying that the story didn't get national news coverage because "Dan Rather knows it's boring when people die at the age God intended."

When Don thought about the C-word, he couldn't remember whether he believed in God. He did remember Maria, a girlfriend of his, once took him to church. The pastor there, a

Reverend Jimson or something, had held his hand for a long time and told him he loved him. After that Don wouldn't go back to church so the girl left, taking with her only what she could carry in her arms, a curling iron, a few books and her alarm clock. On the way out she told Don she would pray for him, but he said not to bother.

As a joke, Don used to think up town slogans for Eliot Park, like sayings you could print on a billboard or brochure for tourism. His personal favorites were, "Eliot Park, the place where everyone's grandparents come to die," and "Come enjoy our beautiful beaches, soak up our radiant sun, have fun, relax, die." Don never shared these with anyone since one of his ever-revolving secretaries had called him morbid.

*Eliot Park, the place where everyone's grandparents come to die ...
Come enjoy our beautiful beaches, soak up our radiant sun, have fun, relax, die."*

As he drank, Don would occasionally glance up and try to catch the eye of his waitress. She was, Don guessed, about 24 or 25, a little big in the hips but attractive enough. She had long, bleached blond hair, which was pulled up in a single ponytail, high on the back of her head. Don had thought about how good she must be in the sack, and about what she would look like naked. When she walked, her hair bobbed up and down, which Don

felt gave her a childish quality that made her all the more attractive. Her name was Helena, or at least that's what her nametag said.

When Helena had first approached Don for his order, he believed he smelled alcohol on her breath. He hoped this was the case; he felt it made her desperate, lonely. As Helena approached the table, Don made a conscious effort to make eye contact.

"You and I are a lot alike," Don said, making a gesture to the glass his drink had been in. She didn't seem to understand.

"So, another Long Island?" Helena said without looking at him. She took his empty glass and was walking toward the kitchen when Don asked what time she got off. She pretended not to hear him.

Don sat further down into his booth. He looked at his hands, they were fat and ugly and he badly needed a manicure. He picked at his fingernails and felt a stinging behind his eyes. His whole body felt heavy, as if his clothes were all soaking wet. Don got up from his seat and stumbled to where he thought he remembered the bathrooms being. On his way he passed Helena coming out of the kitchen. She had her back to him, and so she had not seen him yet. Don reached out and grabbed her arm. As she turned around to face him, he felt the tears begin to come. Things were blurry; he couldn't see her face.

"You are just like me," Don said, much louder than he wanted to. He had almost screamed it, but couldn't help it—something was tearing away inside of him.

Don could sense her fear by the way she tried to pull away, but he just wanted her to understand. "You and me, we should...you see we—" He couldn't get it out. The back of his head was hurting badly now, and he was screaming.

"I need something...something more!" This was the last thing Don yelled. He shoved Helena away and ran for the bathroom. He felt like he was going to be sick. Helena never said anything, she just stared at him, afraid, and then sat on the floor and watched him run.

Inside the bathroom smelled like disinfectant and piss. The tile was checkered yellow and white with yellow wallpaper to match. Don locked the main door behind him with the small deadbolt and went into the stall. He sat on the toilet, staring at his hands and crying. Finally the tears began to subside, but Don thought this was a bad sign, he thought this meant he was dying. As his vision cleared, Don looked from his hands to the stall door on which was scrawled the words, "Love is all you need," and signed

John Lennon.

The quote made him think of Maria. She used to listen to the Beatles while taking a

bath. Don would sit on the toilet, smoking and listening to her explain every song to him. She was a fanatic. He could still see the hazy outline of her figure just under the surface of the water. She was tall and thin and Don remembered her dark, Hispanic skin as the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

Don leaned back and propped his head on the wall behind him. He stared at the flickering, fluorescent light above. The only thing he could feel was the tearing loose of something deep inside him, and Don prayed it would never give way.

September 11, 2001



Students share their thoughts and reactions on the terrorist attacks and the aftermath.

Photos by Jennifer Murphy

Old Glory Still Stands at Attention

By Patrick Rawls

On Tuesday September 11, 2001, I, as well as every other American, stood before the television in absolute numbness. Who could possibly hijack our airliners and then crash them into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and Camp David? This was not only a massive destruction and a loss of life; it was an act of war that caught us off guard.

I didn't know what to think, how to feel, or what to do. Should I rage with all the fury of Hell? Should I feel deep grief for the thousands who needlessly lost their lives? I wanted to go to New York and lend a small hand with the recovery. The Truth is, I was angry, but at who? I was also grieving. Was I more grieving than angry? I certainly could not go to New York. The only thing I knew for sure was that I wasn't the only person who was confused.

As I pondered the morning's events and my own emotions I walked to my flagpole in the front yard. As I stood looking at her, Old Glory seemed to feel as blue as the rest of America must. The air was still. The

sun was hidden behind a cloud. Old Glory just hung there in a depressed state. With all of these emotions welling up inside me I decided I must do something. I simply could not let her hang in shame.

I lowered the flag to half-mast, shed a few tears, and



Photo by Jennifer Murphy

said a prayer to myself. I was showing all the respect due. I was supporting every effort to capture and punish the criminals that were responsible. Finally, I asked the Lord to somehow comfort those who were grieving even more so than me.

As I turned to walk away I experienced something that made me as proud to be an American as I have ever been before. The breeze picked up. The sun came out and shone on Old Glory as bright as ever. Old Glory quickly snapped to attention and started

waving emphatically.

"Hey, remember Pearl Harbor? How about Oklahoma City? Do you think my citizen's are going to let me fall? I've been knocked down before, but I've NEVER been knocked out. The purpose of this vicious attack was to break my will. I am now more resolved than ever. This attack was to prove that one man could maim, destroy, and kill at his own leisure. It only served to seal his fate. This attack was to create fear, discord, and distrust among my people.

It failed.

You see; my government did not retreat. The people of this nation stood in the face of danger and joined forces to care for their fellow citizens. Civil unrest did not prevail.

I am stronger today than I was yesterday. Rest easy young man. This too, I shall overcome!"

While her soul may have been bruised, her spirit was not. Old Glory picked herself up from the ashes and rubble of New York, dusted herself off, and flew full sail the rest of the day.

By
Josh Cain
Junior/Business

tuesday

Tuesday, September 11, 2001

I have seen the rollover of a new millennium, and now I can say I have seen the beginning of a war.

All day today, images and sound bytes of terror and horror and gore were plastered across televisions worldwide. "US succumbs to terrorism" are the headlines.

Tonight, after a football game which was played unaffected by what happened earlier today, there were heavy rains, which started at the beginning of the football game, and yet somehow thereafter completely missed the intramural fields.

If only those rains were in NY, cleansing the debris-ridden streets. You walk outside, and the rain has cleansed the surface of the earth, there is no real debris, only a fresh, clean, earthy smell. Not the tangy smell of burnt ozone and jet fuel, singed hair and flesh.

I'm still relatively unaffected by what happened earlier today, and yet, I had a checklist, of close friends and relatives that I know are out there, possibly being affected by what happened today on such a grander scale.

Jeff, stuck in Germany, due to the closedown of all airports in the United States. My aunt and uncle, on a cruise in the Mediterranean, somewhere near Turkey. Once I know that they are all right, and will remain so, I'll cease to worry about the repercussions of what went down today.

In my short life, I have witnessed 2 great historical events, one majestic, such as the millennium, and one horrific, one that very well may cause extended strife in multiple parts of the world.

'What could we have possibly done to incur such a wrath?'

The worst part of what happened today is that it was designed by someone envious of the lives we live, of what we stand for, of how we govern ourselves in our homeland. Something so petty that one man would preach to his fellow countrymen, and create such a hate for our country, that so many innocent lives were taken.

What is the point of hijacking a plane and crashing it into a building? Was it an attack on our economy? "those American pigs have too much money, that they toss around freely"

Was it an attack on our lifestyle? What could we have possibly done to incur such a wrath, especially of someone who has never been to this country, never seen first hand how we live. What objective did these actions achieve? What did it do, other than kill tens of thousands of people who have never even thought about the Middle East, let alone do something to change it, or how it was run, or what the people believe. The Palestinians are dancing in the streets, giving out candy.

The crisis workers are out in the streets, struggling through the rubble and wreckage, searching for lost souls forced to an early death by ignorant savages, giving out bandages and pain killers, trying to soothe the pain and suffering brought on unprecedented. What reaction will this bring, other than the death of more innocent people, whether here or somewhere else.

What a hypocritical world we live in.
What's the point?

9 11 01

By Micheil O'Rourke-Cole
Senior/Journalism

And then the war hapened-

I have to admit I have been off my game these last two weeks. Things have been due, past due and I am getting way behind in even extended grace periods, because of the war.

Everyone who even remotely considers themselves a writer, and even those who don't, are writing something about the events that began September 11, 2001. We all have something to say-and rightly so. This is the most searing event in recent American history.

The death toll rises every day.

My convictions about defense and military conflict have been tested and I keep waiting for emotions around the country, as well as my own, to settle into rational thinking or at least, calm. I have found through it all that I am still against war.

'There is a deepening sadness with this current synergy and it doesn't seem to be getting any better.'

I am an educated woman today. I got my first smell of death in this global arena when I was a teenager. I watched my generation struggle with Vietnam. Some went to fight, some went to Canada, some burned their draft cards and some of us just prayed and waited for it to be over. More than 50,000 died, over almost a decade in a Southeast Asian country condemned by the circumstances of the political times.

Potentially, that many could have lost their lives last Tuesday. I don't trust the numbers of actual missing and presumed dead, but the mission in New York City has been changed now, for me, from rescue to recovery.

There is deepening sadness with this current synergy, and it doesn't seem to be getting any better. We have been asked to move on to resolve, and I think some of us have, but some of us have not. The resolution before us makes me want to cringe and hide and cry. How many more lives are to be lost and broken?

I feel like I am on the very edge of history and the abyss below is more than overwhelming. There are no words. We are not well enough yet for words. As a country, I don't believe we are well enough for war. We are prepared, we are anxious. We certainly have enough money, armed forces and motivation. But we are not well. It is as though we are entering into this relationship with death like an errant lover, seeking asylum in another's arms. Impulsive, blind, unfaithful to our vow of liberty and justice for all, with the expectation of brevity to accomplish that which brief encounters can not give us. The goal, not the course of action and all that that will entail, possess us. And it could go on like this for years.

I know this is not supportive talk, but I am reminded of the message constantly that we have not removed the plank from our own eyes whilst we look at the speck that obscures the vision of another. We are ready for a fight, we are not ready for bloodless peace.

As I write, troops are being deployed to a country far away from our homeland to die in defense of freedom. Unlike the many at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania, these men and women got to say goodbye before they went, truly making freedom just another word for nothing left to lose. Does anyone else see the uselessness of giving one's life for a belief. Surely the terrorists didn't. They placed their cause above the lives of what is now reported to be over five thousand souls.

I have always believed that the purpose of a fundamental principle was to live it, not die in defense of it. Who is left to live it, to believe in it? Who is left to carry on?

The rhetoric of attack against other innocents is passing, but it is inevitable that more people will die and that is just wrong. The guns they will aim at our young and strong are weapons we very likely provided.

I am not opposed to defending ourselves. I admire those who would take on that task, those who face the tools of



Photo by Jon Davis Senior/Forestry Engineering

death and trust the sword of preservation. We are not involved in imperialism; this is not manifest destiny. Therein lies my conflict. I can see the necessity to strike back and in my way I am asking others to do that for me, because I am unable. I can only write checks to help the victims. What makes my resistance to war solidify is the worthiness of perhaps some other way to correct, to heal, to triumph over any enemy.

Soldiers must do what sol-

diers must do. It is a calling, like the firefighters and rescue workers, the religious leaders and cowards like me- who can only write and pray and tell the world that war is not the answer. It has never been. Living well and free is the best revenge. War will do nothing less than clip the civil liberties we cherish and endanger everyone's right to them. We can justify this action, certainly, but can we go deeper as a country, as a people and not sanctify it? Could that be what would set us apart from those who would place the righteous cause before the honorableness of life? Let us not lose sight of justice.

My brother is a firefighter. He tells me that in his vocation you stand before the fire, pray to God that He will let you see your kids again, and then you go do your duty.

Today, let this be everyone's prayer.

The day when it didn't even matter

By Ryan Lee
Senior/Journalism

I steadily felt it falling Tuesday.

As the reports were coming in and the images were becoming more graphic, indeed it was eroding. By the end of the day there was no trace of it.

Along with the tragic collapse of the two World Trade Center towers in New York September 11, something else came crashing down: the hyphen in my title.

Being biracial, I have always identified more with my African-American heritage and culture; and fighting for equality and justice for African-Americans has been one of my primary goals.

In the midst of this fight for justice, African American has often been substi-

tuted with other titles opponents found more appropriate, ranging from "angry black man" to "the nigger."

However, on Sept. 11, it hit home more profoundly than it had ever before in my 21 years: I now have only one title.

American.

I cannot begin to describe the emotions I felt watching television that day. It didn't matter if I was watching the coverage of the disaster on CNN or SportsCenter, the

process and the feelings were all the same:

I would hear someone talking about the attack.

I would think of the two buildings and a



bright blue sky.

Photo by Jennifer Murphy
Senior/ Public Relations

The two buildings and the bright blue sky were gone.

And then the chills would come. And the chills have stayed.

Though I personally don't know anyone directly involved in the terrorist attack on America, I feel an incredible loss each time I replay the attacks in my head.

I imagine 5,000 people doing things we used to call normal, and then I imagine those same 5,000 people being in a situation none of us have the courage to dream about.

This was not an attack on 5,000 strangers. This was an attack on America's way of life, and 5,000 of our innocent brothers and sisters were viciously singled-out as targets.

The hell-bound cowards who executed this ambush succeeded in two things I had always thought were impossible: They waged a war on the most powerful country in the world (just how powerful, they will soon understand) and they

put the "united" in U.S.A.

This maniacal attack happened to Americans in America-beyond that nothing else matters to me.

I hear the pain of victims who made calls before they perished, I see the pain of family members holding onto whatever hope they can and I feel the pain of the courageous people searching the rubble for survivors.

I am not the only one who feels the pain; America feels it too. No matter the religion, political ideology, ethnicity or

location-Americans feel the pain.

Old Southern gentlemen in rural parts of what used to be the confederacy feel the pain so much, they use their store marquees to send goodwill messages to the Yankees: PRAY FOR NEW YORK.

The tree-hugging anarchists who refuse to use corporate soap feel the pain so much, they attach yellow ribbons and American flags to

'My indifferent, irreverent ass of a roommate feels the pain so much, he continuously entertained the idea of enlisting in the armed forces.'

their backpacks.

My indifferent, irreverent ass of a roommate feels the pain so much, he continuously entertained the idea of enlisting in the armed forces.

Our citizens with Middle Eastern and Islamic backgrounds feel this pain as well. It is vital that Americans do not attack the innocent citizens out of rage for something those citizens had no part in, and strongly condemn.

Each of us feel the pain. We were all New Yorkers that day, and we are all Americans now.

President George Bush, who I disagree with on nearly every political policy, has brought me to tears as I watched him during the crisis.

In news scenes with rescue workers and in religious settings, Bush has displayed more poise, confidence and knowledge than he has done since elected.

Elected, huh, that's a funny word. I remember about 10 months ago, Bush's election victory sharply divided our nation. Wouldn't it be perfect if history remembers his administration as on that united our states and citizens.

It feels good to be together, but you can't help but wonder how this utopian unity will last.

I think and hope our collectivity stretches far beyond the mourning period of our nation is currently experiencing.

For the first time in most of our lives we have seen what hatred can do. It should now be clear how evil hatred toward our fellow humans can be.

Americans can no longer be supporters of hate and discrimination, whether it be on grounds of ethnicity, sex, political affiliation, or sexual orientation.

When you find yourself stereotyping others and practicing hate; think of Tuesday Sept. 11, 2001; and think of the people in the World Trade Center towers.

Those people aren't there anymore. Those buildings aren't there anymore.

And remember the walls that have kept Americans divided for so many centuries aren't there anymore either.

May we all work to make sure these victims are never forgotten, and the barriers that keep Americans so divided, are never restored.



Traveller By Robert Viotle
Senior/Journalism

Ghost By Laura Lee Partain Senior/Liberal Arts

This Ghost which haunts me day and night is not that of some forgotten spirit or some lost soul

*It is someone who is still very much alive and still very much in my thoughts
It was ignorant to assume this ghost would just vanish, just go away and leave me to live my life*

He controls my actions, even though it seems sometimes these actions would not follow his wishes

*These actions only push me closer to him, they make me hate all other guys,
slowly pushing me back into the corner he controls*

*I say I want to be free of him, but I look to him when things go wrong
What is it that pulls me in every time?*

Do I just know we are meant to be together or am I so caught up in a fantasy that I can't see the reality just under my fingertips

I wish for once that I would listen to myself; hear how crazy I sound; how insane my idea of the future is

But this ghost in my brain, in my heart, keeps telling me to hold on, everything will be fine in the end

I am tired of listening to the ghost, I can't trust my heart, so where does this leave me?

I'm trapped, looking for the one thing which eludes me at every turn

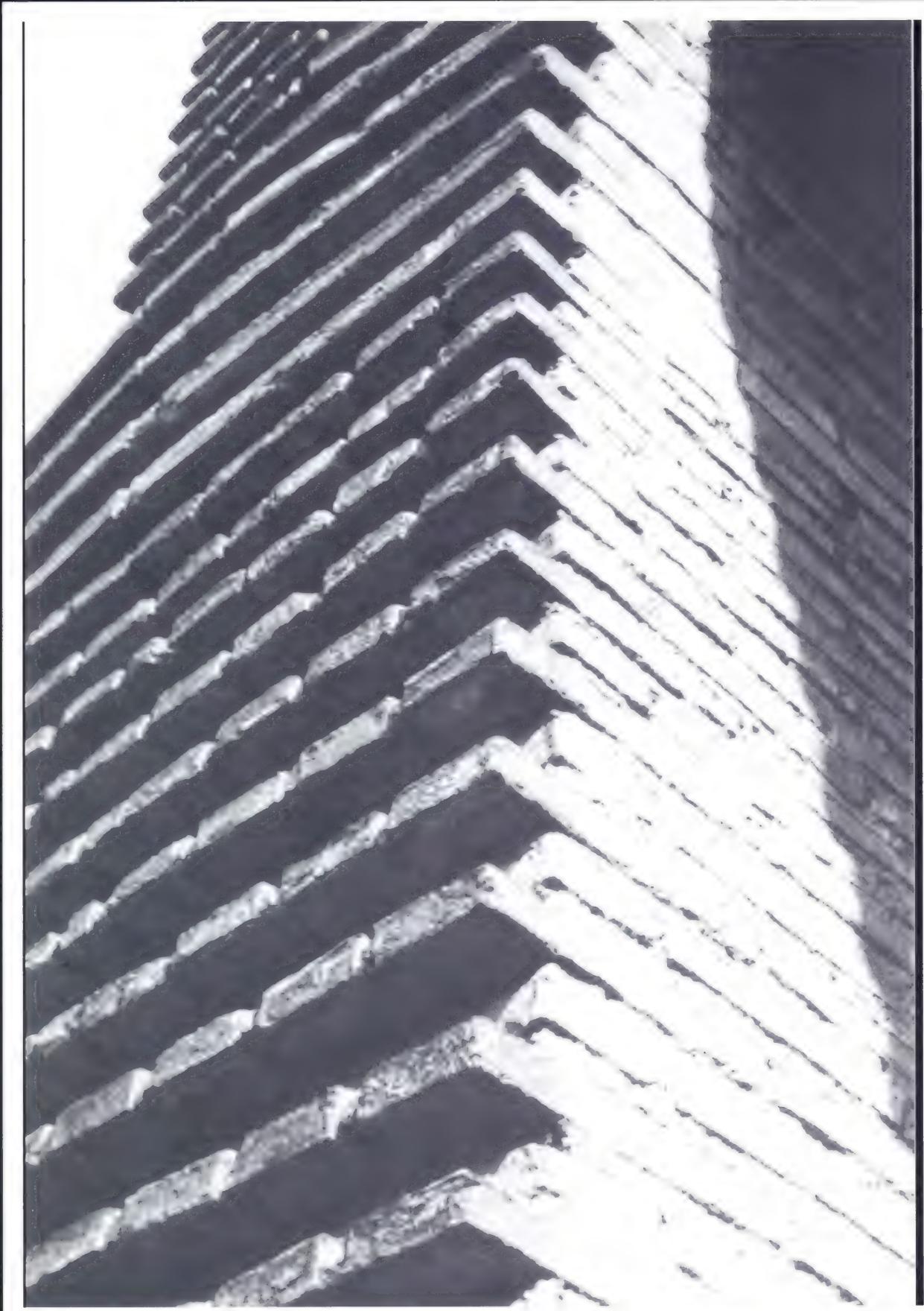
*It has come to me, this ghost has to leave me alone
I want a normal life*

If only I could truly fall in love, no strings attached, no sorry I'm not able to give you my full attention

*Someday this ghost will either go away or become some distant voice, which I choose to keep locked deep in my heart
until there is little hope of love for me*



By Clay Cox
Senior/Poultry Science



The Coliseum Rome, Italy Photo by Emily McGlohn
Senior/Architecture



St. Peter's Cathedral - London England

*Photo by Emily McGlohn
Senior/Architecture*

Don't Take Nature for Granted

By Sarah Moreman
Senior/English

October 1, 2001

Numerous white placards with black words screaming “Stop the Quarry” grabbed my eye as a friend and I sped down Highway 14 towards Loachapoka, where a fundraising event called “Rock the Quarry” took place. It was Saturday, September 29, and we were on our way to give our support for the Loachapoka citizens’ rallying against Florida Rock Industries’ plan to establish a granite quarry between Loachapoka and Notasulga.

Ever since one of the local landowners sold his mineral rights to Florida Rock this past summer, the Loachapoka community could not help but feel betrayed. After trying to preserve the beauty of the land and Saugahatchee Creek for many years, the citizens did not want to see their hard work go up with the smoke of crystalline silica. The inevitable repercussions of decreased property value, air and noise pollution, tainted water, and land erosion were lodged in many concerned minds. The citizens pulled their weight by writing letters to the newspapers, putting up signs all over the place

announcing, “Don’t Take Loachapoka For Granite!”, raising money to launch a lawsuit, and petitioning the governor for a moratorium against quarries.

This was where “Rock the Quarry” came in: a fundraiser and also pep rally to voice the fierce spirit resonating from the strong opponents of the quarry. Strolling towards the Loachapoka Community Center where there were people milling about, we paid our support before entering. Upon greeting several people we knew, we had to raise our voices due to the bands playing their hearts out. It was a beautiful day with the sun smiling upon our heads and a mild breeze cooling us. The atmosphere might be peaceful, but we all came here to make a statement: “Rock the Quarry.”

Why should I care about Loachapoka, if I was from Auburn? I have this deep love for land and would do anything to maintain its natural beauty. My family owns some land in Loachapoka, so I did have a connection to the Loachapoka community. I love coming out here, away from the stressful busy-ness of the growing metropolitan area of Auburn/Opelika.

There was nothing like the countryside to relax one's uptight stance. The smell of nature with the wind blowing through your hair while you lay on the grassy meadow gazing at the rolling clouds against the deep blue sky. It was one of those moments that you should not take for granted. Would you want to have that particular moment taken away from you, just because you were offered the promise of more money being brought into the area?

My friend, the money from having a quarry in the West Lee County will not benefit you and your fellow Lee County citizens.

Rather, the money would go to Floridians and other neighboring states. Why should other states take advantage of our "Alabama the Beautiful," just because they have money to buy our land from us? They only see our state as a wasted space of land, a landfill, so they have dismissed our fierce love for Alabama.

Recalling what I'd learned from Dr. Wayne Flynt's Alabama History class during my sophomore year, Alabama was the state that had more minerals than any other and also had more geographical regions. I was very glad to take that course, for Dr. Flynt had opened my eyes to the well-kept secrets of Alabama. Words could not describe the pride I had

for my home state. Every Alabamian should be aware of how valuable our state is and fight to uphold the state motto: *Alabama the Beautiful*.

Alabama is becoming a wasteland of quarries and landfills. Just drive over to Chewacla Park and hike down to the waterfall. Look at the waterfall and the water streaming down the large rocks. The water looks filthy and unswimmable, let alone drinkable. With my impeccable

memory, I remember my younger days spent frolicking among the rocks and splashing the water that was clear as glass. I would forever treasure that

Sunday afternoon in my fifth grade year that my family had spent together, having fun and taking pictures to capture the innocent moment against the background of clean water and plentiful nature. Now all I have left from that day are pictures and my memories. No clean water and the trees are wearing thin. Between the trees, one could not help but see the reddish dustbowl-like valley of a quarry that had been sucking the life out of Chewacla Park.

The disintegrating state of Chewacla Park was proof enough for the Loachapoka and Notasulga citizens to rally against Florida Rock establishing a granite quarry. Florida Rock did try to

*'Every Alabamian should
be aware of how
valuable our state
is and fight to uphold
the state motto:
Alabama the beautiful.'*

appease them by declaring that they would do their best to not let the polluting factors get out of control, such as not bringing in chemicals. According to the information booth at the "Rock the Quarry," it was stated that there was no way to prevent those working around the quarry-operating areas from breathing crystalline silica. Breathing crystalline silica would result in acquiring either respiratory problems or a lung disease called *Silicosis*. Breaking ground with machinery would cause jarring of land miles away, disturbing houses and water aquifers. Plus, noise pollution should be considered with the heavy three-axle trucks entering and leaving the quarry along with the blast vibrations. And with this,

the road maintenance would increase. That means increasing unnecessary costs for the citizens to pay, when they were opposed to having a quarry in the first place. On top of all that, an area would not just stop with one quarry. There would be more "related industries such as concrete and asphalt plants" coming in. The description of the Valley of Ashes in the beginning of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* came to mind as I asked this question: who would rather relax and enjoy the surroundings of dust, ashes, granite, and crystalline silica to unquarried land of grass and trees?



Florida Rock might promise that they would try not to destroy the trees and grass as much as possible. They probably did not consider this angle: water. Water is very important. Having the granite quarry would affect our water. Chewacla Park used to be overflowing with water. The waterfall was a vision to behold; but thanks to the Martin-Marietta quarry, the water is dribbling down between mildewed rocks.

Please keep Chewacla in mind when you

think about the Saugahatchee Creek having the certain possibility of being contaminated or drying up from the Florida Rock quarry.

With all these facts stuffed in my brain by the time we left the Loachapoka

Community Center, I

was more than ever determined to make sure that the rest of Lee County was aware of the long-term factors of having another quarry in the area. The contagious fervor to save Loachapoka/Notasulga from being blasted out of its foundation should be noted in these three words: "Rock the Quarry."

Unrepentant

By Michael McCollum

Upon the rust colored water
I lazily sway past
The whitewashed French Villas
Of a colonial Vietnam.
Ancient reminders of my former self
Stream through my head,
And I shudder at the horror,
Thinking I had merely left home,
I now see I had escaped-
A flight that has brought me
To this murky delta
Sailing upon a makeshift craft
Painted a gentle color of blue-
Always blue,
Back grounding a red angular face
Upon the ships wooden mast.
An ancient face, squared at the eyes
Penetrating generations of wisdom.

A stale smell of sweat
Begins to penetrate the air,
As a stiff forewarning wind
In my western face
Tries to push me back into the jungle.
I square my shoulders
To the Pacific that crashes before me,
To the Pacific that margins my home.
Unrepentant, I turned my back,
With heals to the ocean.

Playing Beethoven

By Katherine McDonald
Junior/English

It was 1:37 AM. I lay on my bed in the semi-darkness of my room. The glow of the fish aquarium threw faint shadows on the wall. In the hollow stillness the ticking of the alarm clock was startlingly loud. If I listened closely, I could faintly hear my younger brother Toby snoring in the other room.

Sitting up, I switched on the lamp. It was one of those antique lamps made from an old money bank that you find in junk shops and flea markets. The base of the lamp was a bank in the shape of a grand piano. Mom had given it to me for my 18th birthday in March—three weeks before she died. It was June now.

I sat on the edge of my bed for a few moments with my head resting in my hands, trying to silence the roaring in my ears. The fugue by Chopin, Mozart's Opus, Beethoven's Sonata—these and several other pieces were churning in my brain. All the notes were becoming jumbled and dissonant. The more I tried to suppress it, to think of something else, the louder the sound became. "Come on, Clay.

Get a grip," I told myself.

I reached for the piece of paper on my bedside table. It was the program for my senior recital that was scheduled for 7:30 the next evening. Dr. Heinrich had given it to me that morning to make sure I played my pieces in the order that he wanted. I had told him again and again that I didn't want to play the Beethoven. I was mad as hell when I saw that he put it first. He had silenced my objections with his glare.

Now, as I looked at the sheet, a panic rose inside of me. I wouldn't remember them. I'd forget and make a fool of myself. My hands would be unsteady. Looking down I noticed that my hands were trembling even now. I crumpled the program until it was a wad of ivory paper and threw it against the wall with as much force as I could. It bounced off and fell to the floor with a soft thud.

I threw on a pair of worn blue jeans from the pile of dirty clothes that had been accumulating for a couple of weeks. I tiptoed down the stairs and through the den.

Dad was asleep on the sofa. He still couldn't sleep in their bed by himself. He could barely stand to go in their room. He'd moved some of his clothes downstairs to the hall closet and took showers in my bathroom.

Moving slowly and quietly, I maneuvered through the dining room, past the writing desk where Mom had always sat to grade papers, and into the kitchen, being careful not to step in the cat's food dish. I grabbed my keys from the hook by the door. It wasn't until I was outside that I realized that the keys I had picked up were Mom's. In the darkness I must have taken the wrong ones. Her key ring was like a collection of tiny keepsakes. She had her old skate key; Dad's high school ring; the string of beads I had made her in kindergarten; a round piece of wood that said "#1 Mom" (the first thing Toby had made in his wood-working class); the piano charm that I had won in fifth grade; a penny with a hole through it so that she always had some "cents" with her; and finally a small pouch with pieces of colored chalk. There were only four keys—one to our house, one to the high school, one to her history classroom, and one to her green VW bug that still sat in the garage.

Rather than risk waking Dad up by going back to get my keys, I decided to take her car. Being 6' tall, I could barely fit behind the wheel. I had to sit hunched over with my elbows almost touching my knees. I cranked the engine and backed out of the

driveway. Once I had driven a little way down the street, I slowly let out my breath. I didn't want to have to explain to Dad why I was leaving at 2 in the morning or where I was going.

'I switched on the radio to muffle the noise of my own thoughts.'

The air was warm and smelled of grass clippings and gasoline. The houses on our street were dark. The whole neighborhood was still. I could make out a few signs in lawns that said things like "Congratulations!" and

"Way to go Graduates".

Our high school graduation was the next week, and families were already beginning to celebrate. My best friend Isaac's mom kept talking about how she'd cry all the way through our graduation ceremony. Mom wouldn't have done that. She knows how I hate it when people cry. I could imagine her there with a proud smile on her face. She would be clapping—not patting her hands together like some women do, but really clapping. She'd be wearing her blue suit that makes her look like she's in her twenties, holding Dad's hand or clasping her hands in her lap. The faint scent of her perfume would hang in the air around her.

I took a deep breath. The VW had been cleaned after she died, but it still smelled of the spilled papier-mache that her class had used to make three dimensional maps, the mildewed books that she always checked out from the library, Altoid's Wintergreen mints, and strong hazelnut coffee.

I switched on the radio to muffle the noise of my own thoughts. The radio was tuned to her oldies' station—a station that played a lot of Beetles music. Their song "The Long and Winding Road" was coming to the end. She'd loved all music, although she couldn't sing and had never learned how to play an instrument. I think that's why she had been so excited when I started to play the piano.

I drove to Millsville High School. It was something Mom and I had always done on the nights before my recitals. The school parking lot was completely empty. I parked in the space marked #19. This had been Mom's space ever since she started teaching twenty-three years ago. I turned off the engine and sat for a few minutes fingering her key ring like my grandmother had fingered her rosary the day of the funeral.

I got out of the car. There was no moon, but Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata was pounding in my ears.

I unlocked the side entrance and stepped into the back stage of the school auditorium. Groping in the darkness for the light switch, I wondered if this was what it felt like to be blind—reaching, hesitant, acutely aware of small things—like the smooth texture of the wall against the palm of my hand, a small rock on the floor under my shoe, the leaves of a potted plant brushing against my leg. I finally located the panel of light switches and flipped the first one. I squinted as the light burst forth from the inky blackness. I saw that I had turned on the stage lights. In the middle of the stage stood the new concert grand piano that Mom and the choir director had convinced the school to buy several years before.

I sat down on the piano bench, staring for several minutes at the black and white ivory keys. I had been so nervous the night before my first recital . . . years ago. I couldn't sleep. Mom had brought me here. We were both wearing our pajamas. Mom sat on the front row, in the sixth seat from the aisle. She had told me to play as if the whole world could hear me.

For years afterward, the night before every recital, we would come. And she would sit on the front row, sixth seat from the aisle and listen. I didn't have to look down to know that her eyes were watching me with faith and confidence. She would listen with intensity, focusing on every note, every nuance in the music. Knowing this pushed me to play better than my best.

As I held my hands over the keys, I tried to imagine her sitting in her usual seat, willing her to be there. My fingers moved lightly over the keys as I began playing the opening measures of the Beethoven. Mom had begged me for years to play it. The Moonlight Sonata was her favorite piece of classical music. I had spent all winter learning it secretly, hoping to surprise her with it tonight.

I closed my eyes and played it then. Giving each note the perfect touch and emphasis. Every muscle in my body tense. I played and played, until I was exhausted and drained, and numb. Afterwards, I just sat for a long time staring out into the empty void of the auditorium.

What I know now is that I had quit playing for the world a long time ago. On those nights, I was playing only for her.



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**What is rhythm?
The Sound of my steps steadily
crunching
the path before me.
The pit-pattering of summer
raindrops
in the leaves of my heart.
This aching within me
freed in little rivers
down my cheeks.
It must be you.**

By Lionell T. Smith
Veterinary Medicine

*Photo by Alyson Hargrave
Senior/Fine Arts*

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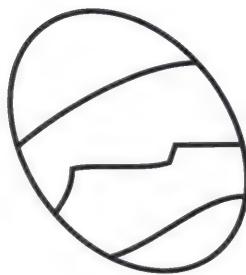
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photo by Jon Doris
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Easter



By David Ennis, M.D.,FACP
alumnus

"What a miserable day. Where the hell is the chart?" I grumbled as I settled down at the desk. I sipped a cup of bitter, over-warmed coffee and watched the mist and fog smear the darkened windows of this new intensive care unit on an unusually cold, wet and dark Easter Sunday. The ward scurried up with the chart. I uttered a brusque thank you and begun my perusal.

The patient's history is much as I had already heard. A 50-year-old man found "down" in his backyard for an unknown length of time received CPR and cardioversion with restoration of blood pressure and sinus rhythm, but no spontaneous respirations. He apparently had previously been healthy except for a heart problem a decade or more ago that was thought to be resolved. He was a leading business executive and a deacon in his church, a very important office here in the Deep South. He was married with three children, one of whom was in college.

I heard a rustle nearby and looked up to see a well-dressed and well-groomed family, each of whom was carrying a Bible into the patient's room. I buried my head deeper into the chart to avoid their glances and the looks and the tears and the despair.

The usual consultants had been

called—pulmonary, cardiology, neuro-surgery and neurology. The man was found to have had a myocardial infarction, which was complicated by an arrhythmia. Computed tomography of his head revealed diffuse cerebral edema with impending herniation. The EEG performed later showed only minimal brain activity. The chart was littered with phrases such as "no spontaneous movement or respiration," "hopeless situation" and "futile." But everyone pressed on as if they thought this man would arise again.

I heard the nurse ask the patient's family to leave. They ended their prayers and slumped out. I entered the room and found the patient lying quietly on the bed, his chest laced with wires and IV tubing. He looked much younger than I had expected and was far from the pudgy, balding, jowly man I had imagined. Rather, he was tall and muscular with only a few lines around his eyes and gray at his temples belying his age. He was tall, too tall for the bed, and his knees were bent slightly, with his feet crossed against the bed railing. He lay there silently and peacefully, his arms splayed to his sides. The light from above the bed illuminated his chest and face and left the rest of his body in the red duskiness of the room.

I began my examination, first tracing the drips and IV's to which the man was tethered. I heard a noise of someone entering the room, but thinking it was the nurse, I did not look up. My examination was interrupted by the clearing of a throat and the words,

"We're expecting a miracle." I looked up to see an elderly woman, fashionably dressed and lightly bejeweled. She said again, "We're expecting a miracle, you know." I looked at her more closely. She had a thick shock of silvery hair. She was not tearful or frightened, but determined, seeming to know absolutely that a miracle would occur. Her eyes were blue and shone as if fired from within by some furnace of religious conviction.

What could I say? What should I say? What would I say? Do I parrot the phrases that I had seen on her son's chart, which no doubt had been recited by numerous others before me? Do I use my best "doctor voice" and discuss EEG's and brain waves and uncal herniation? Do I recite the data in the medical literature dealing with the poor outcome of such conditions and describing my own prior experiences?

Or do I become cruel and say that her son's brain is being squeezed out of the bottom of his skull like a grape out of its hull? That he will lie there lifeless and unfeeling, while he is prodded and pricked and violated. That

letting this go on is pointless and cruel and she should just let him die.

Or do I rage against her? Do I say to her what I wanted to say to the other dozen families I had talked to already that long cold day? I was tired of facing them,

with their frightened and tearful and expectant faces. Each one expected a miracle. "Why not let the man die?" I wanted to exclaim, "especially on this of all weekends—with its theme of death and rebirth to a better life. What is wrong with dying? Why has death become cowardice and surrender? He's going to die, can't you see, and there is nothing anyone can do about it. You expect too much."

I stared into those molten blue eyes again for what seemed to be a long moment. The only sounds in the room were the hushed whisper of the ventilator and the hum of the IV pumps. What would I say? What could I say? What would you say?

I stared into those blue eyes and said, "I expect a miracle too."



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Five days before my thirteenth birthday, my father was sentenced to life in prison for killing my stepmother. That was three years ago, but it's still big news in my tiny town of Starlington, Alabama. It turned out that my stepmother's Daddy was a judge and her brother was a congressman, but I didn't know any of that until after she was dead. In fact, I hardly knew anything about Annie Dupres at all. She and Daddy had only been married for three weeks when she died. My little sister Nolie, who was seven, said that she'd known Annie must be rich because her nails were polished. My brother, Johnny, agreed.

"I could just smell the money on her."

That's what he'd said. I don't know what money smells like, but since Daddy picked her up at a roadhouse, she probably smelled like cigarettes and beer.

I don't know why Annie married my father. He was nearly twenty years older than she was and had four kids. Our mother had been dead for three years. She died having my little sister, Kat. The night Kat was born, Daddy got drunk and hit Mama, so Kat was born early. Mama died. We didn't talk about it and by the time Kat was one, I couldn't remember my mama's face.

I'm sure Annie knew about my mother the night she married my father. That night, her father had said something to make her angry so she packed her things, stole his car, and headed into town. Annie told me this herself a few days before she died. She ended up at The Chickadee where my Daddy was drinking. Two hours later, they woke up a justice of the peace and by three in the morning Annie Dupres

became Mrs. Ira Marable.

That was January 5th and Daddy woke us up to introduce us to Annie. We all stood on the porch, wrapped up in quilts, our breath coming out in big white gusts as we stared at the yellow-haired woman Daddy had called "your new mother." She didn't look like a mother. She looked younger than Johnny, who was eighteen.

Daddy always left early in the mornings, no matter how late he'd been out the night before. Sometimes, he went out in the fields and farmed, but most of the time, he headed into town. We never asked what he did there. That first morning, when Annie woke up and found him gone, she just walked around the house in big circles, her eyes never stopping on one thing. I asked her if she wanted some breakfast, but she didn't answer.

That night, she put up the shelf.

It wasn't a shelf really, just a warped board balanced on some nails. Johnny asked her if she wanted any help, but she said, "No, thank you." Those were the first words any of us had heard her speak. My sister Nolie, who was seven, told me later that Annie's voice made her think of church.

Annie put the shelf right in the middle of the living room, over a sagging sofa that was covered in huge green roses.

"What's it for?" I asked her.

"My music boxes."

Annie went back to the bedroom and returned with a cardboard box. She began pulling wooden boxes and glass balls out of

the box and putting them on the shelf. Each of the boxes had something different on the lid. The one that was shiny black had a piano on it. The light brown one had roses. The glass balls were filled with water and little colored bits of paper. Annie ran her hands over each one. Then, she reached into the box and pulled out a ballerina on a pedestal. It was made of porcelain, Annie said, and was fragile, so we shouldn't touch it. "You can play any of the music boxes you want, so long as you're careful," she told us, "but leave this one alone."

I had never seen anything so beautiful as that ballerina. Her hair was light brown and her dress was blue. I remember looking at the folds of her skirt and wanting to touch it so badly, I thought my fingers wouldn't listen to my brain, that they'd just go up and grab it.

Annie backed up from the shelf and looked at it. She smiled and began humming under her breath. I'd never heard the song, but it sounded happy. My mother used to hum while she sewed, but it was always hymns, usually "Nearer My God to Thee".

Annie didn't know how to sew. She couldn't cook or do laundry or even clean the house either. When I came home from school, she was sitting on the porch swing or staring at her shelf. Once I came home and she was sitting on the couch with her face in her hands, crying. I backed out of the room before she could see me.

Daddy didn't really care what Annie did during the day. As far as he knew, it was Annie, not me, that was doing all the housework, so he was OK with Annie and left her alone.

Six days before Annie died, her shelf fell off the wall. We were all eating supper when we

heard a crash from the living room, followed by the horrible sound of all those music boxes starting up. Annie got up so fast, her chair fell over and the rest of us followed her in to the living room.

Annie's shelf lay at the foot of the couch. Her music boxes lay scattered, their hinges broken, some of their lids cracked. The glass balls had shattered and their water left dark pools on the brown carpet. My eyes jumped through the mess, looking for the remains of the ballerina. I saw it at the same time Annie did.

It was perfect, lying on its side on the carpet. It had fallen on the couch and rolled safely to the floor. Even the thin white arms, stretching to the ceiling, were still there. Annie walked over to it and stared at it before bringing her foot down with a sickening crunch. The ballerina crumbled into shards of blue and white and brown.

"No!" Nolie cried and I had to pull on her arm to keep her still.

Annie looked at my father, who had been silent through all of this. "Might as well," she said. "In this house, it would have been broken eventually anyway."

She looked at the remains of her music boxes and I thought she might cry. Instead, she picked up a handful of the rubble and threw it at the wall. "Jesus Christ!"

I had never heard a woman take the Lord's name in vain before. Nolie put hands over her ears and Johnny backed up into the kitchen.

Daddy crossed the room in two steps and grabbed Annie's arm. "Watch your mouth."

I wanted to leave, but I couldn't.



Lindsay Herman

Senior/Graphic Design

Annie looked up at my father and tried to pull her arm back. When he wouldn't let go, she balled up her fist and hit him right in the stomach.

It couldn't have hurt him. Annie was nearly a foot shorter and seventy-five pounds lighter, but it stunned him enough that he let her go.

Annie did cry then. She wiped at her face with the heel of her hand as she went to the bedroom and slammed the door. Daddy turned around and stormed out the back door. I heard the truck start up and screech off.

Nolie helped me clean up the mess, and as we sopped up the last puddle of water, she looked at me and said, "Annie hit Daddy."

I nodded.

"How come Mama never did that?"

"I dunno."

"I think Annie could do just about anything."

I didn't want to agree, so I just shrugged. But when Nolie wasn't looking, I took the biggest piece of the ballerina I could find, a blue chunk of her skirt, and put it in my pocket. That night, I lay in my bed and turned that chunk over in my hands. It was the first time I had ever thought a woman could be brave.

It was me that found Annie. Nolie and I were headed back from school that day. It was cold and the sky looked like an upside down gray bowl. You couldn't see a single cloud, but there wasn't any blue in the sky. As we walked up the path to the house, I noticed that the porch swing was swinging, but it was empty. I thought maybe Annie had just gotten out, but as we got closer, I could see a streak of bright red on white wood of the swing. I started walking faster. There was more red on the rope that held the swing and something black on the top porch step. It was

Annie's shoe. My feet wouldn't stop moving and suddenly I was running, my whole body hot even though it was January.

I reached the steps and turned the corner. Annie's body was lying under the swing, her blond hair deep red, one arm stretched out like she'd been reaching for something.

'It was the first time I had ever thought a woman could be brave.'

Johnny had taken Kat to the doctor for her cough. Then I picked up Nolie and ran to a neighbor's house.

They found Daddy passed out in somebody's barn. They arrested him for Annie's murder that night. The only evidence they had was Daddy's temper and that Annie had been killed with a hatchet and he had a hatchet, even though there was no blood on it. A bunch of Annie's jewelry was missing and the whole house was a mess, but no one seemed to care about that. My father was kept in jail until spring circuit court began and on April 13, the jury gave him a life sentence. Since Johnny was eighteen, the court said he could look after me and my sisters. He quit his job in town and started farming. He made a better go of it than Daddy ever did, that's for sure.

I didn't sleep the first night that Daddy was gone. I sat awake and thought of Annie's hands on her music boxes. I thought of her hitting Daddy and walking away. And then I closed my eyes and saw her dead in a heap on our porch. I clutched the chunk of blue porcelain in my hand so hard it broke the skin. Then I opened the window next to my bed and threw it out.



By Clay Cox
Senior/Poultry Science

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